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INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE
FOR THE ELABORATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL
CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION
IN THOSE COUNTRIES EXPERIENCING SERIOUS
DROUGHT AND/OR DESERTIFICATION,
PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA
Ninth session
New York, 3-13 September 1996
Agenda item 2

# DESIGNATION OF A PERMANENT SECRETARIAT AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR ITS FUNCTIONING: PHYSICAL LOCATION

## Note by the Secretariat

1. INCD decision 7/5, adopted at the Committee's seventh session, took note of the interest expressed by some governments at that session in hosting the Permanent Secretariat. It also invited interested Governments to transmit the details of their offers in writing to the Interim Secretariat, taking into account the elements of information with respect to this issue contained in Annex II to document A/AC.241/34, as amended.[1] Paragraph (c) of decision 7/5 requested the Interim Secretariat to present a compilation of offers received at the ninth session of the Committee.

2. In decision 8/2 at its eight session, the INCD then requested Governments interested in hosting the Permanent Secretariat to submit the details of their offers, pursuant to its decision 7/5, prior to 1 June 1996.

3. Prior to 1 June 1996, the Interim Secretariat received offers from the Governments of Canada, the Federal Republic of Germany and Spain to host the Permanent Secretariat in Montreal, Bonn and Murcia respectively.

4. For ease of reference, Annex A reproduces the text of Annex II of document A/AC.241/34, as amended. Documents A/AC.241/54/Add. 1, 2 and 3 contain the Canadian, German and Spanish offers.

[1]The amendment added the words "as well as support provided for the INCD process" at the end of paragraph 10 of Annex II.

GE.96-62403
96-20057

ANNEX A

Categories of information which might be requested from countries interested to host the Permanent Secretariat
(Amended version of Annex II of document A/AC.241/34)

Legal framework

1. Privileges and immunities which would be conferred on the Permanent Secretariat and its staff members

2. Rules, including any restrictions, applicable to the employment of dependents of staff members

3. Nature of Headquarters agreement, if needed

Features of the office site and related financial issues

4. Main features of the building to house the Permanent Secretariat, including office space, facilities for conferences and availability of general services (security, maintenance, etc)

5. Basis for placing the office facilities at the disposal of the Permanent Secretariat, such as:

   (a) ownership by the Permanent Secretariat (through donation or purchase)

   (b) ownership by the host government without rent

   (c) host Government ownership with rent and amount of such rent

6. Responsibility for:

   (a) major maintenance and repairs to the office facilities

   (b) normal maintenance and repair

   (c) utilities, including communication facilities

7. Extent to which the office facilities would be furnished and equipped by the host Government

8. Duration of the arrangements regarding office space

Local facilities and conditions

9. Description of the following facilities and conditions:

   (a) diplomatic representation in the host city

   (b) presence of international organizations

   (c) international transport and travel facilities

(d) local transport facilities

(e) local availability of trained personnel for possible employment in the Permanent Secretariat, taking account of language and other skills

(f) health facilities and access to them by staff members of the Permanent Secretariat

(g) availability of suitable housing

(h) availability of schools at all levels, including in languages other than local language, if any

(i) facilities for transfer of funds to and from foreign countries for the Permanent Secretariat and its staff members

Other relevant information

10. Any additional contributions to be made by the host Government to meet the operating costs of the Permanent Secretariat or to defray conference service expenses, as well as support provided for the INCD process

11. Any other information which the potential host country may deem relevant

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# DESIGNATION OF A PERMANENT SECRETARIAT AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR ITS FUNCTIONING: PHYSICAL LOCATION

Note by the Secretariat

Attached, as indicated in document A/AC.241/54, is the offer of the Governement of Canada to host the Permanent Secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification in Montreal.

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96-20100

**Presentation of Montreal as the Headquarters of the Secretariat created under the Convention to Combat Desertification**

**Offer of the Government of Canada to host the Secretariat created under the Convention to Combat Desertification**

**May 1996**

**Permanent Secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification**

## Introduction

For a number of years Montréal has enjoyed a growing international reputation as an ideal location for important governmental and non-governmental international organizations, thanks to the concerted efforts of the Government of Canada, the Government of Québec, the City of Montréal and the Montréal International Conference Centre Corporation. Some fifty organizations now have their headquarters there, and many of them are within the limits of the "International City" in the heart of the metropolis. The business, research, and university communities, and various organizations active in international affairs have participated actively in this development. The environmental field is particularly well-represented.

On the international scene, Canada is considered one of the principal actors in the environmental field, at the United Nations and in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), at the OECD and in the G7, in the Commonwealth and in the Francophonie. Québec, which gives a very high priority to environmental questions and to international cultural and technical cooperation, plays a key role in the Francophone world and in the Francophonie. As for Montréal, this city whose quality of life is highly praised has made a priority of sustainable development and the protection of the environment and natural resources, in the urban context.

Canada, the seventeenth country to ratify the Convention to Combat Desertification, on December 1, 1995, has played a significant role in the preparation, the negotiation, and the conclusion of this Convention. Combatting desertification and drought is a global concern. African countries are the most severely affected; however, some countries of Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and certain parts of Central and Eastern Europe, are also affected. No country can remain unaware of the problems of drought and desertification, and all have an interest in the search for solutions and ways to combat and prevent these problems. These measures are intimately linked to those adopted to deal with the problem of the conservation and protection of biological diversity, and the measures adopted for the protection of the ozone layer and climate change. Montréal is the ideal site for the implementation of Agenda 21 and of the commitments made by the international community regarding sustainable development, and is a place where the Secretariat will find partners for whom the sustainable development of natural resources and the protection of the quality of life which flows from this are absolute priorities.

These efforts at the international level have been accompanied in Canada and Québec by an active public awareness campaign to encourage good management for conservation and protection of soil quality against degradation and erosion.

. . .

The Government of Canada is convinced that Montréal, which is already the headquarters of a number of international environmental organizations, is an ideal site for the Permanent Secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification.

The following paragraphs summarize the principal advantages and benefits resulting from the proposed establishment of the Secretariat in Montréal, and provide the information requested from countries wishing to host the Permanent Secretariat, as indicated in Annex II of Document A/AC.241/34 (7 June 1995), entitled "Categories of Information which might be requested from countries interested in hosting the Permanent Secretariat".

**Legal framework**

1. *Privileges et immunities to be accorded to the Secretariat and to its staff* 1/

Under federal legislation, the Government of Canada may give legal recognition to international governmental organizations, as well as privileges and immunities to their employees and to representatives of member countries, under applicable international conventions. The Government of Québec also has a policy under which it accords prerogatives. Appendix "C" describes the various privileges and immunities granted by the Government of Canada, as well as the prerogatives granted by the Government of Québec.

2. *Rules, including any restrictions, applicable to the employment of dependents of staff*

The spouses of employees of international organizations, as well as their children, in certain conditions, have easy access to the employment market (see Appendix "C").

3. *Nature of headquarters agreement, if needed*

A headquarters agreement is normally concluded by the Government of Canada with the international organization establishing itself in Canada, modeled on previous agreements signed with the United Nations organizations already established in Canada (e.g. ICAO). Such an agreement specifies the privileges and immunities accorded and establishes the legal status of the organization.

*Other considerations*

There are no restrictions on entry into Canada for citizens of any country, who are personnel of an international governmental organization (IGO), experts, or participants in meetings. The granting of visas is also facilitated for the activities of IGOs.

**Site characteristics and related financial issues**

The City of Montréal has designated part of the downtown business district as the International City, where most of the international organizations that have chosen to locate in Montréal can be found. The International City also includes the World Trade Centre, the Palais des congrès convention centre, the Montréal Stock Exchange and the new headquarters of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

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1/ The italicized titles are taken directly from Annex II of Document 34.

of the United Nations. This new building, that ICAO will occupy in November 1996, includes offices of the delegations of member countries as well as an international conference centre whose facilities will be made available at nominal cost to UN organizations. The International City offers a range of quality services adapted specifically to the needs of international organizations and activities.

Montréal, which ranks among the leading North American cities in terms of the number of major international meetings held annually - along with Washington and New York - has a diverse array of complexes, rooms, and facilities for conferences. The International City contains the Palais des congrès, an ultra-modern complex with a capacity of up to 12,000 people. Many hotels of various categories offering thousands of rooms at excellent prices (there are 20,000 rooms in the Montréal region) are located in the International City itself, or within a short walking distance. The International City has a vast range of services and advantages, from easy access to its "Métro" subway system and the "underground city", to the availability of proven suppliers of services such as translation, interpretation, rapid printing, couriers, caterers, and others. It also has ultra-modern telecommunications equipment and installations, including for video conferences. The headquarters of major telecommunications companies are also situated in the International City.

4. *Main characteristics of the building to be used by the Secretariat, notably regarding the size of the offices, conference facilities and general services available (security, maintenance, etc.)*

In accordance with its mandate and well-established practice, the Montréal International Conference Centre Corporation (MICCC), which is mandated by the governments of Canada and Québec and the City of Montréal, undertakes to install the Secretariat from the outset of its operations in a prestige building in the heart of the International City, close to the major international environmental organizations which are already established there. MICCC, whose headquarters is also located in the International City, is ready to accommodate the Secretariat without charge when the choice of Montréal is confirmed, until the Secretariat is installed at its permanent offices. MICCC intends to make every effort to ensure that the Secretariat's installation is carried out efficiently, and according to the decisions taken by the Convention's responsible authorities. These would include, among others, the choice of the site, the leasehold improvements of the premises, the functional and architectural planning, the choice of furniture, computer, telecommunications and other equipment, and the financial and technical conditions of the lease to be established with the owner of the building. MICCC will provide recognized expertise to the organization to advise in these choices.

5. *Conditions relating to the provision of offices to the Secretariat:*

*a) transfer to the Secretariat (donation or sale)*
*b) pro bono provision of space*
*c) rental (amount of rent)*

**The offer by MICCC provides for a period of pro bono occupancy in the context of a commercial lease which would be negotiated for the Organization. MICCC would install the Secretariat in a space of one thousand two hundred square meters (1,200 m²), and offers a total financial contribution of $CAN 700,000 (approximately $US 500,000) to provide the Secretariat substantial assistance towards the cost of rent for the first years of its installation. This assistance could take two forms and**

its extent could vary according to the choices of the Organization. The choices are as follows:

**Option A**: MICCC offers completely free rent (base rent2/, fit-up costs3/, and operating expenses4/) for a period of three (3) years, under a ten (10) year lease with option to renew. The lessor will have the responsibility for repairs and major maintenance costs5/, while the costs of the services6/ will be the responsibility of the Organization.

**Option B**: MICCC offers free base rent for a period of five (5) years under a five (5) year lease with option to renew, and will also pay the fit-up costs. The Organization assumes all of the operating costs - subject to indexation according to the increase of the Consumer Price Index or according to the real increase in costs, as well as the cost of services. The lessor will be responsible for repairs and major maintenance costs.

6. *Responsibility for the following services:*

*a) major maintenance work and office repairs*
*b) maintenance work and ongoing repairs*
*c) public services including communications installations*

See options A and B above regarding the conditions of the provision of offices to the Permanent Secretariat, to be discussed with the Organization.

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2/ **Base rent**: is the rent for the premises excluding the cost of the fit-up for occupation by the Organization.

3/ **Fit-up costs**: are the costs related to fitting up the interior of the premises (leasehold improvements) so that they can be occupied by the Organization; they normally include the construction and the finishing work for walls, ceilings, floors, including carpeting or other finish, electrical fixtures and doors, according to plans.

4/ **Operating expenses:** are the normal expenses required to operate a building. They include the costs of energy and the maintenance of systems (heating, air conditioning and ventilation, elevators), daily cleaning of the offices and public spaces, hook-ups to public telephone and cable systems, as well as security, management and minor repairs in the premises. These expenses are estimated at $US 100 per square meter annually.

5/ **Major maintenance costs**: are the costs required for the maintenance of the building (structure, heating and air conditioning systems), and to make periodic improvements.

6/ **Services:** are the costs normally incurred for communication (telephone, fax); the cost of acquiring and maintaining furniture and office equipment as well as their operation is at the expense of the Organization.

7. *The extent to which the host government would provide office furniture and materials*

The Secretariat will be able to draw upon the contributions provided by the Government of Canada, the Government of Québec and the City of Montréal to pay for furniture, telecommunications and computer and other equipment which remain the property of the Organization.

8. *Duration of the contract for the occupation of the space*

The duration of the lease will depend on the Organization's choice of option for the provision of offices to the Secretariat. It could be five years (Option B), with option to renew, or 10 years (Option A) with option to renew.

*Other considerations relating to conference installations*

The offices of the Secretariat would be provided with meeting rooms for the normal and ongoing needs of the Secretariat and its functions. Furthermore, just as with other international organizations in Montréal which benefit from its specific assistance, MICCC will make its conferences and meeting rooms available to the Secretariat without charge for meetings of its committees and functions. They will be available for the transition period, and when the Secretariat is installed in its own offices they can be used for overflow periods when its own facilities are full. For other conference needs, MICCC would also help the Secretariat identify the most appropriate facilities within the network of nearby conference centres, according to the number of people attending and the duration of the meetings or other events planned.

Finally, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), which already cooperates closely with the Secretariat of the Multilateral Fund of the Montréal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, and with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, will also make its rooms and conference facilities available to the Secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification at a nominal charge. The new headquarters of ICAO, located in the International City, includes, beyond the offices of the delegations of member countries of ICAO, a conference centre designed and built to the requirements and standards of the United Nations and outfitted with the latest equipment. The general assembly hall of ICAO, with capacity of 1,000 and subdividable into two rooms, as well as a second room with a capacity of 250, will also be made available. Both are equipped with simultaneous translation equipment that meets UN standards. MICCC and ICAO are currently in discussions to establish a mechanism to facilitate access by international governmental organizations.

**The Montréal offer**

In summary, the elements of the offer by the partners in the candidature of Montréal are as follows:

- The Montréal International Conference Centre Corporation offers a financial contribution of a total value of $CAN 700,000 (approximately $US 500,000), to provide the Secretariat a period of free occupancy at the outset of its establishment, and to occupy offices set up according to its needs and to its satisfaction.

- The City of Montréal offers a total financial contribution of $CAN 280,000 (approximately $US 200,000) over a five-year period.

- The Government of Québec offers a total financial contribution of $CAN 1,250,000 (approximately $US 890,000) over a five-year period, and offers, at the discretion of the Secretariat, a loan of services worth $CAN 1,050,000 (approximately $US 750,000) for the same five-year period (this would take the form of professional services of two persons for work of a neutral character such as management or administrative support).

- The Government of Canada offers a total financial contribution of $CAN 4,000,000 (approximately $US 2,860,000) over a five year period.

  The Secretariat could draw upon the contributions of the City of Montréal and the governments of Canada and Québec to pay for the acquisition of furniture and the various equipment that it would require.

Beyond the support measures outlined above, MICCC will provide the Secretariat with a range of services which it usually offers to international organizations establishing themselves in Montréal:

- Temporary accommodation of the Secretariat for the transition period;

- Designation of an MICCC representative, aided by experienced government and private sector personnel, responsible for:

  a) facilitating the installation of the Secretariat in its temporary offices during the transition period (see Q: 5);

  b) facilitating the process of permanently installing and completely setting up the Secretariat (see (Q: 5); and,

  c) facilitating the installation of non-Canadian employees of the Secretariat, including their access to essential services of the public sector (e.g. access to health programs) and private sector (e.g. employee search, housing, placement of dependents in the school system, assistance for spouses of senior officers seeking employment).

The total value of Canada's offer is summarized in the following table:

| SECRETARIAT OF THE CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Contribution by partners** | **$CAN *** | **$US **** |
| Government of Canada | 4,000,000 | 2,860,000 |
| Government of Québec<br>Loan of personnel | 1,250,000<br>1,050,000 | 890,000<br>750,000 |
| City of Montreal | 280,000 | 200,000 |
| Montréal International Conference Centre Corporation (MICCC) | 700,000 | 500,000 |
| TOTAL | 7,280,000 | 5,200,000 |

* The amounts indicated in $CAN represent the official offer of each partner.

** The exchange rate used: $US 1.00 = $CAN 1.40. Amounts in $US are indicative.

**Services and conditions at the site**

9. *Descriptions of the following services and elements:*

*a) diplomatic representation in the host city*

Montréal has more than 85 consulates in addition to the permanent representation in Montréal of some 50 countries at ICAO. Montréal is two hours by highway from Ottawa, the capital, where there are more than 110 diplomatic missions. Of the 115 countries which have signed the Convention to Combat Desertification, 65 have consulates general or consulates in Montréal, and 80 have high commissions or embassies in Ottawa. Each of the 35 other countries signatory to the Convention which do not have an embassy or high commission in Ottawa have official representation in New York or Washington. Also, 42 of the 115 countries signatory to the Convention have representation at the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

Montréal is about one hour by direct airline connection to New York. This proximity to the Headquarters of the United Nations and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) constitutes a real advantage. This is amply demonstrated by the ease with which New York-based representatives from least developed countries, the small island developing countries, as well as African and Central and Eastern European countries, can take a one hour flight to attend ICAO meetings. There is no doubt that member countries of the Convention will appreciate this advantage, particularly since New York is where the meetings of the United Nations General Assembly and its main bodies are held. Montréal is also one hour by air from Washington, where there are many embassies of countries signatory to the Convention, as well as the Global Environment Facility (GEF), a major international institution offering financial assistance in the environmental field.

*b) presence of international organizations*

For many years, thanks to the concerted efforts of the Government of Canada, the Government of Québec, the City of Montréal, and the Montréal International Conference Centre Corporation, Montréal has enhanced its international role as a preferred location for major international governmental and non-governmental organizations. Some 50 of them now have their headquarters there, and many are in the International City at the heart of the metropolis. The business, research, and university communities, as well as organizations dedicated to international affairs have participated actively in this growth. The environmental field is particularly well represented.

In less than five years, Montréal has become a major centre of attraction for international organizations involved in sustainable development. The Secretariat of the Multilateral Fund of the Montréal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer has operated there since 1990, with remarkable efficiency and success. The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, whose official inauguration took place on May 6, 1996, is already in full operation. Also, ICAO has the capacity and the willingness to offer its administrative and logistical support to organizations linked with the United Nations. There is also the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation (a North American Free Trade Agreement institution), the Montréal office of the World Conservation Union (IUCN), the E7 Network of Expertise for the Global Environment which was created by the G-7, and the International Water Secretariat, which is dedicated to increasing public awareness of the problems related to water and whose activities are oriented to developing countries where poverty is a crucial problem.

This summary list of international organizations should also extend to non-governmental organizations which, even if they are not international by constitution, nevertheless have international development assistance activities, and whose mission is recognized by the Canadian International Development Agency which subsidizes them. Canada has some 120 non-governmental organizations dedicated to international development and forming the Canadian Council for International Cooperation. Some 40 of these organizations have their headquarters in Montréal. In this regard, and of particular interest to Secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification, the headquarters of Solidarity Canada-Sahel (SCS) is in Montréal. This coalition of 33 non-governmental organizations involved in international development is dedicated to the drought and desertification problems of the Sahel region, and has made the implementation of the Convention its mission and its priority. This organization fully supports the present candidature of Montréal. Montréal is also the location of the Centre for Studies in International Cooperation and of OXFAM-Québec, two organizations which are particularly active in international development.

*c) transportation and international travel*

Two international airports serve Montréal (Dorval and Mirabel). Some sixty airlines use these airports, and air links to most major international destinations are frequent, rapid and convenient (for example: daily links with European airports from Mirabel, which is less that 45 minutes from downtown). Montréal is in the same time zone as New York, Washington and Toronto--one hour by air with frequent scheduled flights to these cities. Dorval Airport is less than 15 kilometres or 20 minutes by car from downtown Montréal, and is accessible by public transportation

and dedicated shuttle service. As of 1997, long haul international flights will use Dorval Airport, which will improve connections.

*d) local transportation network*

The Montréal region has an excellent public transportation network. Its Métro subway system is known around the world for speed, safety and comfort. Many stations are linked to the underground city, a vast commercial network which extends over 29 kilometres. Automobile traffic is generally fluid and rapid. Within the Montréal Urban Community (which covers the Island of Montréal, with two-thirds of the region's population), public transportation fares are uniform (i.e. not distance-related). A single fare, one of the lowest in the world, includes Métro, bus and train service.

*e) availability of qualified personnel for the Secretariat, considering linguistic and other necessary skills*

The service industry is particularly well developed and diversified in Montréal and includes many world class corporations in engineering and consulting, as well as researchers, lawyers and jurists, specialized in various sectors and disciplines related to sustainable development and whose competence is internationally renowned. Also, the presence of many cultural communities assures access to a large pool of multilingual workers.

*f) health services and accessibility to services by the staff of the Secretariat*

Persons resident in Québec have access to a complete social protection regime which includes free access to medical care and hospitals. Montréal is an internationally renowned health research centre. Montréal hospitals are at the leading edge in medical treatments, and many of them are affiliated with the medical faculties of the Université de Montréal and McGill University, among the most renowned in Canada. Many hospitals in the metropolitan region have acquired an impressive reputation in Canada and abroad. The Montréal Children's Hospital and Hôpital Sainte-Justine are among Canada's leading child care hospitals. Hospital and medical care and health services are available in French, English, and in many cases, other languages.

*g) access to appropriate housing*

The cost of housing in Montréal is very reasonable and the rental or the purchase of housing and apartments is widely affordable -- even in the downtown region, which includes townhouses as well as apartments.

*h) existence of schools at all levels and of establishments providing education in languages other than the official languages.*

The Québec education system is unique in that it offers free, complete and public education in French and in English, from kindergarten to its post-secondary institutions, known as CEGEPs. CEGEPs, in which students enroll after their secondary studies, offer high-quality university preparatory and technical programs. More than 80% of the student population attends public institutions and nearly 20% attend private schools, of which many are renowned and attended by many foreign students (including many dependents of personnel of the United Nations and

multilateral institutions in Washington). Montréal includes many institutions with international affiliation (including two French lycées), some of them teaching in languages other than English and French (e.g. German, Japanese, Greek, etc.)

Montréal has four important universities, two French-speaking (Université de Montréal and the Université du Québec à Montréal) and two English-speaking (McGill University and Concordia University), as well as three large and highly reputed schools at the University level, the École Polytechnique, the École des Hautes Études Commerciales, and the École de technologie supérieure. Employees of the Secretariat, their spouses and their children will enjoy university access under the same conditions and at the same cost as Québec students. Québec universities have fee levels that are the lowest in Canada, and far lower than most U.S. universities, while their standards are recognized to be equivalent if not higher.

i) *fund transfer services with foreign countries for the Secretariat and its personnel*

There is no restriction on fund transfers to and from foreign countries for the Secretariat or its personnel. The Canadian banking and financial system is one of the most solid in the world. In addition to the Canadian chartered banks, Montréal has numerous foreign financial institutions, such as the Banque Nationale de Paris (Canada), the Banque Nationale de Grèce (Canada), the Hong Kong Bank of Canada, and the Bank of Boston of Canada. Leading-edge technologies and major international electronic networks permit access to accounts held in institutions that do not have branches or representation in Montréal. The main Canadian chartered banks have branches or representation in the main cities of the world and can therefore offer rapid, effective and reliable fund transfer service for the Organization and its personnel.

**Institutional support**

**Because of its geography, its vast resources and a solid scientific, technological and industrial network involved in sustainable development activities, Canada has a wealth of knowledge and substantial capacity for technology transfers, which is described in Appendix A, entitled "Canada and Desertification." Québec also has a remarkable range of programs and institutions dedicated to the implementation of the mission of the Convention (see Appendix B, "Québec and Desertification"). Montréal is endowed as well with many resources in the environmental field, including internationally renowned institutions such as the Botanical Garden, the Biodôme, and the Biosphere. The four large Montréal universities as well as the École Polytechnique have recognized capabilities in the field of sustainable development. Montréal is the location of the federal St. Lawrence Centre (150 persons), which is a centre for research and for the implementation of a vast conservation and protection program for the St. Lawrence River. It is also the location of the Canadian Meteorology Centre. Montréal is also the seat of the Centre patronal de l'environnement, with some 900 environmental companies; and, research centres specialized in water, energy, forests, environmental assessment, environmental law, etc. (such as IREQ, Québec's energy research institute, which has more than 300 researchers).**

**Cost of operations and cost of living**

Particularly favourable operating costs have been a determining factor in the decision of some 25 international organizations to locate or to move their headquarters to Montréal over the last five years.

Figures published by the International Civil Service Commission on comparative costs of the payroll of UN employees in various cities reflect the major difference in purchasing power. Thus, the total payroll in Montréal for the expected staff of the Secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification would represent 56% of what it would be in Geneva, 66% of that for Bonn, 75% of that for Madrid, and 96% of that for Nairobi.

The cost of living index set by the United Nations for certain cities establishes the following comparisons as of March 1, 1996:

| Canada Montréal | Switzerland Geneva | Germany Bonn | Spain Madrid | Kenya Nairobi |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 113 | 202 | 172 | 150 | 118 |

The Daily Subsistence Allowance set by the United Nations for these same cities as of March 1, 1996, is as follows (in $US) :

| Montréal | Geneva | Bonn | Madrid | Nairobi |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 130 | 236 | 214 | 233 | 145 |

According to the United Nations comparative data base, the operating costs for an organization located in Geneva are 79% to 82% higher than for an organization located in Montréal. Locating in Bonn would involve costs ranging from 52% to 65% higher than for Montréal; 33% to 79% higher for Madrid than for Montréal; and 4% to 12% higher for Nairobi than for Montréal.

Finally, according to the 1995 annual survey entitled "CRG Worldwide Cost of Living Ranking," published by the Corporate Resources Group of Geneva, which covers 125 international cities, Geneva had the 4th highest cost of living (including rent), Dusseldorf (near Bonn) was in 20th place, Nairobi was 36th, Madrid was 53rd, and Montréal was 114th.

**Quality of life**

Montréal and its region constitute an economic, industrial and cultural metropolis of over 3 million inhabitants. A cosmopolitan and multilingual city, Montréal is the city in the world where English/French bilingualism is most widely practised. The highest quality of life is available at a favourable cost, as shown by a comparative study of 100 metropolitan regions in 45 countries by the "Population Crisis Centre" of Washington (1991), which ranked Montréal in first place on the basis of 10 indicators: public health, the cost of food and meals, living space, quality and cost of housing, communications, education, air and water quality, traffic and noise pollution. Montréal can be proud of the safety in its streets, notably its downtown streets, which are always full of activity. Crime is considerably lower than in many other major North American cities.

Montréal is a cosmopolitan city, where more than 80 ethnic communities can be found. They enrich the metropolis with their vitality and their dynamism and are important players in Montréal's international activities, in both economic and cultural terms.

The Permanent Secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification would be located in the International City close to the major international environmental organisations and the new ICAO headquarters, in the heart of Montreal.

On one side, the International City is part of Old Montréal, Montréal's historic sector. Dominated by City Hall, this is a dynamic and vital neighbourhood which has many highly rated restaurants in all price ranges, as well as residential housing in heritage buildings or brand new apartment buildings that blend the charm of the historic sector with all modern conveniences -- all at very affordable prices. The International City is also a few steps from the Old Port, Old Montréal's waterfront along the St. Lawrence River, where the arrival site of the first explorers is now a splendid waterfront promenade where Montrealers and visitors enjoy all the seasons. They walk along the St. Lawrence waterfront, watching the many shows, taking water cruises that show off the city's dramatic skyline, crossing the water to islands where the Expo 67 international exposition took place (now a public park). Pleasure boats are also moored at the Old Port, and one of the most enjoyable sections of Montréal's network of bicycle paths runs through the Old Port and along the Lachine Canal (there are more than 200 kilometres in this network in the Montréal Urban Community).

On the other side, the International City is part of the downtown business district, and includes one of the city's main arteries, René Lévesque Boulevard. On this boulevard is Place Ville Marie, a major multifunctional complex with surrounding public amenities, a landmark of modern Montréal. The International City also has many points of access into an underground city of boutiques and restaurants, and even performance halls. This underground development is the longest and best known in the world. With its links to the Métro system, it provides shelter from inclement weather in a protected space that is safe and offers varied activities.

Access to the great outdoors is particularly easy. Less than one hour's drive to the south are the mountains and countryside of the Eastern Townships, and the American states of Vermont and New York. At the same distance to the North there is the immense Laurentian region, which is covered with hundreds of lakes and dozens of ski centres. A city of festivals (jazz, international films, etc.), renowned for the quality of its productions and artists (e.g. the Montréal Symphony Orchestra) and for its museums, Montréal is one of the key cultural centres of North America.

**Conclusion**

**The struggle to preserve soil quality is an important mission for Canada's multilateral and bilateral cooperation. The partners in Montréal's candidacy are convinced that the Convention to Combat Desertification is an essential tool for the protection of the environment and sustainable development in the wake of the Earth Summit at Rio, and an indispensable mechanism for cooperation around the world.**

This offer, complete and definitive, responds to the questions set out by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee of the Convention. The partners to this offer are ready and willing to provide further clarification as judged useful and necessary by those responsible for analyzing this offer, and, if needed, to discuss certain details in greater depth in order to facilitate the decision-making of member countries of the Convention.

## APPENDIX A

## CANADA'S INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENT AND THE CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

The Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) is an important milestone in the implementation of commitments made by nations at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. Canada played a key role in negotiating the Convention, a role which is a natural outgrowth of Canada's long-standing concern about the problem of desertification in developing countries, especially in Africa. Over the past years, Canada has allocated considerable resources -- in both funding and technology -- to combat the problem.

Canada participated in the negotiations of the CCD with a committed delegation that made important contributions to the drafting of the legal, financial, and scientific components of this Convention. Given Canada's bilingual nature, and considering its membership in both the Commonwealth and La Francophonie, it had a unique role to play during the negotiation process. Canada has provided approximately $CAN 600,000 to the Interim Secretariat of the Convention to fund the position of a legal advisor for three years. Also, Canada contributed over $CAN 100,000 to the voluntary fund associated with the CCD to support the participation of representatives from the least developed countries throughout the negotiations.

Canada, through funding provided to the non-government organization (NGO) Solidarity Canada-Sahel (the North American umbrella NGO), encouraged the participation and co-ordination of the global NGO community in the negotiation process. Canada has hosted workshops on reporting related to the CCD, and, through the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), facilitated workshops on research issues of importance to the Convention, such as on Indigenous Knowledge, land tenure, and trade policy. Canada also provides support for the development of National Action Programs (NAPs) in West African countries.

Though technically an affected country, with drylands at risk from desertification in the southern extreme of the Prairie Provinces, Canada has approached the Convention from the perspective of strengthening cooperation with affected developing countries. Canada ratified the CCD on December 1, 1995, making it the second developed country to do so. A considerable portion of Canada's Official Development Assistance (ODA) already goes towards mitigating the problem of desertification through programs of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the IDRC. The Government of Canada's statement on foreign policy "Canada in the World" mentions the Convention, as well as other environmental instruments, as evidence of support for sustainable development. Four of its six priorities apply to combating desertification (basic human needs, environment, women in development, human rights, democratic development and good governance). The link between poverty reduction and desertification issues is strong. A CIDA project which provides technical and financial assistance to the Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) in support for the CCD and for food security is just one example of Canada's commitment to tackling desertification.

Although the majority of funding to combat desertification comes from bilateral programs with CIDA's geographic branches (Africa, Asia and Americas),Canada also provides funding to multilateral organizations and international financial institutions such as the World Bank, United Nations Development Program (UNDP),

United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in the fight against desertification.

In addition, support has been provided to Canadian non-governmental organizations and other national and international partners, such as through an $18.0 million bilateral project with Solidarity-Canada-Sahel to increase awareness about the CCD and to strengthen participatory development with regard to desertification control programs. As an affected country, Canadian universities and world-renowned research institutes are also involved in activities dealing with drought mitigation and land degradation.

## APPENDIX B

## QUÉBEC AND DESERTIFICATION

Over a number of years many Québec organizations have developed strong solidarity with the countries and peoples most severely affected by drought and desertification.

In the first place, the Québec Association of Non Governmental Organizations includes more than 50 NGOs, many of them involved in development activities in the countries most vulnerable to drought.

For example, Montréal is the headquarters of Solidarity Canada-Sahel (SCS), an organization active in projects to reinforce local capabilities in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. The SCS is also active in the international network of NGOs on desertification. It has participated in many international meetings and in the consultative work on the Convention.

Montréal is also the headquarters of the Canadian Centre for Studies in International Cooperation. The Centre has acted for many years as a partner with local communities in concrete projects for rural development that often include the struggle against desertification.

Other NGOs concentrate their action on the population of Québec. For example, Carrefour Tiers-Monde aims to increase the awareness of the citizens of the city of Québec to the problems of the South, through development education. It is active in the International Day of Awareness of Drought and Desertification.

The universities, research centres and institutes for specialized studies have contributed for many years to improving understanding of the problems of the South. Many researchers and professors have acted as experts for international organizations or in international cooperation projects. Université Laval's Centre Sahel, for example, has helped to improve understanding of the drought problems of the Sahel region (soil management, food strategies and policies, regional integration, women and development). Université Laval also has the UNESCO Chair on Sustainable Development. The Université de Montréal, for its part, manages the Centre de recherche sur les populations et la démographie, a research centre that deals with demographic issues.

Québec also demonstrated its dedication by sharing with a large number of countries its experience with its cooperative movement and agricultural unionism, which have largely contributed to its development by emphasizing solidarity, which is indispensable to collective success. Among others the Société Développement international Desjardins is active in the establishment of savings and credit unions in the rural milieu to support local initiatives in a number of countries of the South.

The Société de coopération pour le développement international (SOCODEVI), which includes various types of Québec cooperatives, is active in West Africa and in Latin America among populations affected by desertification and drought. The international development cooperation of the Union des Producteurs Agricoles du Québec (UPA) seeks to improve the food distribution chain by helping farmers to unite, in Mali and Burkina Faso in particular.

The Government of Québec has a variety of expertise related to the solutions which are emphasized in the Convention to Combat Desertification. For example legislative experience in the domain of protection of farm lands and in environmental matters can easily be adapted to legislation aimed at protecting land in arid and semi-arid regions. And as a member government in the multilateral institutions of the Francophonie, Québec has had and continues to have many opportunities to contribute financing, logistics support, and expertise to the benefit of countries affected by the phenomena that the Convention has been established to attack.

Montréal already hosts the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Its interest in also hosting that of the Convention to Combat Desertification arises from the complementarity of these phenomena, from Québec's experience in international affairs, and from its desire to support sustainable development in other countries as well as at home.

**APPENDIX C**

**PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES**

**Convention to Combat Desertification**

**The Government of Canada**

Canada would seek to conclude a headquarters agreement with the UN based on similar agreements dealing with other specialized UN agencies, (e.g., ICAO). Within that agreement, the following provisions would be offered:

A) Officials

1) With the exception of Canadian citizens, senior officials (P4 and above) and officials (P3 and below) will enjoy the privileges and immunities set out in Section 18 of Article V of the UN Convention on Privileges and Immunities as follows:

   (a) immunity from legal process in respect of all acts, including words spoken or written, performed by them in their official capacity;

   (b) exemption from taxation on the salaries and emoluments paid to them by the Secretariat;

   (c) immunity from national service obligations;

   (d) exemption, along with their spouses and members of their families forming part of their households, from immigration restrictions and alien registration;

   (e) the same privileges in respect to exchange facilities as are accorded to officials of comparable rank who are members of diplomatic missions in Canada;

   (f) the right to import free of duty their furniture and effects, including motor vehicles but excluding alcoholic beverages and tobacco products, at the time of first taking up their post in Canada;

2) In addition to the above, senior officials (P4 and above) will enjoy the following privileges:

   - part (f) above for the duration of their posting, including alcoholic beverages and tobacco;

   - relief from the Goods and Services tax/GST (i.e., VAT) for themselves and their dependents. The GST stands at 7% at this time. There is no minimum or maximum claim or expenditure. It is sufficient to request a reimbursement;

3) Members of the family of senior officials and officials forming part of the household will receive authorization to accept employment in Canada. The definition of "members of the household" is as follows:

Spouses

Children under the age of 19 who are unmarried

Children between the ages of 19 and 25 who are unmarried and in full-time attendance at an educational institution in Canada.

Children aged 25 and older who are physically or emotionally dependent.

4) Senior officials (P4 and above) will be allowed, for the duration of their posting to import vehicles free from customs duties and taxes.

The duty free importation of vehicles which do not meet Canadian specifications is allowed with the requirement that the vehicle be re-exported at the end of the employee's term.

5) The immunity from legal process in respect of words spoken or written and all acts done by them in their capacity as officials or as head of the Secretariat shall continue to be accorded, even after the end of their term.

B) Secretariat

1) The Secretariat would be granted relief from the following taxes:

- the GST on all goods and services, including cars for the Secretariat. There are no minimum or maximum limits, claim or expenditures. This will be done by reimbursement;

2) The Secretariat, its property and its assets, wherever located and by whoever held, shall enjoy immunity from every form of judicial process and execution except in any particular case in which the head of the Secretariat has expressly waived the immunity. Such waiver shall not be understood to extend to any measure of execution, save with the express consent of the head of the Secretariat. The Secretariat agrees to establish guidelines regarding the circumstances in which the head may waive any immunity of the Secretariat, and the method in which any such waiver shall be made.

3) The premises of the Secretariat shall be inviolable. The property and assets of the Secretariat, wherever located and by whomever held, shall be immune from search, requisition, confiscation, expropriation and any other form of interference, whether by executive, administrative, judicial, or legislative action, except with the consent of and under the conditions agreed to by the head of the Secretariat. This Article shall not prevent the reasonable application of fire or safety protection regulations.

4) The Secretariat, its assets, income, and other property shall be:

(a) exempt from all direct taxes except for charges for public services;

(b) exempt from customs duties in respect of articles imported or exported by the Secretariat in the furtherance of its function. Articles imported under such exemption shall not be sold or disposed of in Canada except under conditions agreed to by the Government of Canada; and,

(c) exempt from any prohibition or restriction on the import, export or sale of its publications, and exempt from customs duties and excise taxes in respect thereof.

5) The archives and documents of the Secretariat shall be inviolable at any time wherever located.

6) The Secretariat shall enjoy in the territory of Canada for its official communications, in whatever form, treatment not less favourable than that accorded by the Government of Canada to any foreign state, including its diplomatic missions.

**The Government of Québec**

In welcoming an international governmental organization to its territory, the Government of Québec follows the spirit of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of United Nations Institutions (1947) and other international conventions which may be applicable, such as those on diplomatic relations. Thus, under a special agreement, the Government of Québec extends to the organization and its employees tax privileges and legal exemptions (regarding the application of Québec laws), and it also provides a range of prerogatives.

For example, organizations established in Québec are exempt from sales tax, land and real estate transfer tax, municipal or school property taxes, and other municipal assessments charges. Non-Canadian personnel as well as their spouses and families (under certain conditions) are exempt from Québec sales tax. These persons also benefit from several prerogatives, including access to Québec's medical and hospital insurance plan, health and safety protection in the workplace, the granting of drivers' licences without examination, and Québec school tuition levels, among others. The employees of recognized international organizations, and their spouses and their children, enjoy university access under the same conditions and costs as Québec students.

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Agenda item 2

# DESIGNATION OF A PERMANENT SECRETARIAT AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR ITS FUNCTIONING: PHYSICAL LOCATION

Note by the Secretariat

Attached, as indicated in document A/AC.241/54, is the offer of the Governement of the Federal Republic of Germany to host the Permanent Secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification in Bonn.

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96-20069

**Bonn**
**as the location for the**
**Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification**
**in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification,**
**particularly in Africa**

**Offer from the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany**

**The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany**

hereby invites

the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, to move to premises in Bonn in the proximity of the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and offers to support its work in line with the commitments outlined below. The German Government would also be prepared in the longer term to welcome other existing or newly founded UN organisations, in particular those with a substantive link to the global environmental conventions.

I. **Reasons**

Germany is aware of its increased international responsibility following unification. By inviting UN organisations and international environmental organisations to set up their headquarters in Germany, the German Government wishes to meet the obligations this new responsibility brings and testify to its readiness to play a greater role both in the United Nations and in global environmental issues.

One aspect of this new role is the establishment of important international organisations in the field of environmental politics in Germany and in Bonn in particular. The choice of Bonn for the location of the headquarters of the Framework Convention on Climate Change was the first major step forward in this context. The German Government shares the opinion held by the countries of Africa that there is a close link between the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention to Combat Desertification. The German offer takes this link into account.

The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany is offering to make suitable premises available rent-free in the proximity of the Secretariat of the Framework Convention on Climate Change from 1998 onwards for an unlimited period.

Bonn would provide excellent conditions for the work of the Secretariat of the Convention:

As the seat of the Government and the Parliament since the birth of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Federal City of Bonn has an excellent infrastructure. This environment will be improved even further for the Secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification since Bonn, the Federal City, will in accordance with the Berlin/Bonn Law which came into force in 1994 remain the permanent home to certain ministries of importance for the Secretariat's work even after the Parliament and parts of the Government move to Berlin around the turn of the century.

The policy areas of the environment, development, food, agriculture and forestry, education and science, health, culture, research and technology, and telecommunications are all to be maintained and promoted in Bonn.

The continuing presence of parts of the German Government in Bonn will also mean that diplomatic missions will be maintained in the city.

Furthermore, according to the same law, Bonn is to be developed still further as a centre for science, culture and institutions in the area of sustainable development (a centre for international co-operation).

With this offer Germany would like to underline its particular bilateral and multilateral commitment to the work of combating desertification through Bonn as a centre for international co-operation. Support for countries fighting to combat the effects of desertification is one of the priorities of development co-operation, especially in Africa.

Germany has an ongoing programme of some 250 projects under bilateral ODA totalling over DM 1.8 billion. In Africa alone that translates into a commitment of DM 650 million. Germany played a particularly active role in the process of preparation and drafting of the convention. With regard to the measures supported by Germany in this drafting process and in the process of the preparation of the conference

of the parties to the convention, Germany's co-financing of the work of the regional organisations OSS, CILSS, IGADD can be seen as a direct contribution to support the convention process amounting to DM 2.9 million. For urgent measures in Africa a total of DM 5 million was committed.

DM 370,000 has been provided so far in support of the participation of delegates from the LDCs in the INC-D process. In 1996 a further DM 300,000 was committed for that purpose and DM 300,000 for the Trust Fund of the Convention Secretariat.

If Bonn is chosen as the location for the headquarters of the Secretariat, Germany would be in a position to enhance its financial support for the permanent Secretariat.

## II. Germany's offer in the case of a decision in favour of Bonn

Germany is prepared to provide substantial further contributions in support of the establishment of the Secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification in Bonn:

### 1. Provision of suitable rent-free premises

Germany is ready to provide the Secretariat with suitable premises in Bonn rent-free for an unlimited period as of 1998, analogous to the arrangement reached with the Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC). The German Government shall bear the costs of construction and maintenance, whilst the Secretariat would be responsible for the normal user's running costs (e.g. security, cleaning, cosmetic repairs). The Secretariat shall also bear all auxiliary costs, plus all charges for communications systems, water and electricity.

Germany is ready to assume the cost of furnishing and equipping the offices of the Secretariat - including furniture and fittings, data processing and telecommunications equipment.

### 2. Relocation and installation costs

The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany is furthermore prepared to assume the costs arising from the relocation of the interim Secretariat, plus the costs incurred by all employees willing to move with their families from Geneva to Bonn, the installation grants and the cost of German language courses.

### 3. Special costs

The German Government is, moreover, willing to make available the annual sum of DM 1 million to be used for Convention events organised by the Secretariat.

### 4. Increase in voluntary contributions

A relocation would prompt Germany to make a voluntary contribution of DM 1 million to the Secretariat in addition to its existing commitments as a party to the convention.

### 5. Privileges and immunities

The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany is ready to grant the permanent Secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification the same privileges and

immunities as are to be accorded to the Secretariat of the Framework Convention on Climate Change. To this end the terms and conditions of the Headquarters Agreement concluded with the United Nations Volunteers Programme (UNV) on 10 November 1995 shall apply analogously to the Secretariats of the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention to Combat Desertification.

6. **Access to the German labour market**

Germany is ready to give dependants (spouses and children still living at home) of employees of the Secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification access to the labour market in the Federal Republic of Germany. They will not require work permits.

7. **Other**

The German Government will support the Secretariat in recruiting qualified specialised and administrative staff. In addition, the Government is ready to ensure that the Secretariat has the right to use libraries and other establishments with foreign-language documentation resources.

III. **Bonn at the geographical heart of Europe**

The city of Bonn can claim the following assets:

- Within the Federal Republic of Germany, situated in the geographical centre of Europe, the region between the Dusseldorf/Ruhr region and Frankfurt constitutes a central 250 km (160 mile) axis of high economic capacity and unprecedented urban density and diversity. The two cities of Cologne and Bonn (approx. 2 million inhabitants), neighbours just 25 km (16 miles) apart, are located right at the heart of this region. The transport network is excellent, offering motorways, rail links and flight connections to both regional and international destinations.

- Cologne/Bonn airport is just a 20-minute drive away from the centre of Bonn. Using the neighbouring airports of Dusseldorf (one hour by train or car) and Frankfurt (1½ hours by train or car) cities like New York, Nairobi or Delhi can be reached within 7½ hours, whilst most major European cities are less than an hour away.

- Bonn with its 300,000 inhabitants and 170,000 jobs, at the centre of an urban region comprising around 760,000 inhabitants, is excellently situated without the usual problems associated with large conurbations. In its many years as the seat of Parliament and Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, Bonn has developed two characteristic features: a high degree of administrative efficiency, also mirrored in the availability of highly qualified professional staff, combined with quality of life in an environment in which people from all over the world can feel at home.

- Bonn will remain home to several ministries and will thus continue to be a political centre of national and international standing. The establishment of the UNV and the Secretariat of the Framework Convention on Climate Change at the "Haus Carstanjen" site will add to the city's standing. Moreover, Germany intends to expand Bonn as a key location in the fields of science, education and culture, and most particularly as a centre for international co-operation.

- The establishment of, e.g., the following scientific and research institutions in addition to numerous other research establishments already in place is being planned: CAESAR (Centre for Advanced European Studies and Research), the Institute for Research on Developing Countries, the Centre for Research on European Integration.

- Bonn has experience in hosting large international conferences and can offer excellent facilities for this type of event. There is a new conference centre which can accommodate several thousand participants close to the area in which Parliament and Government are currently located. In Bonn and the surrounding area there are more than 6,000 hotel rooms of international standard. The German Government's guesthouse, completed in 1990 on the Petersberg, can be used for special events and representative occasions.

- Bonn, a city situated directly on the banks of the Rhine between the Cologne plain and the central Rhenish mountains (Siebengebirge) has remained a pleasant residential garden city, where it is easy to get around. Thanks to sensible planning and development in the city for both private and public transport, the majority of those working in the centre of Bonn live within half an hour of their workplaces. The centre of the City of Cologne can be reached in 20 minutes by train.

- Rents in Bonn are reasonable compared with the locations of other UN organisations. Given the high quality of supplies and services of every kind, the cost of living in Bonn is not high.

- Generally speaking facilities in Bonn, especially those for health and telecommunications, are able to meet the most exacting standards.

- Bonn, Beethoven's birthplace, has first-class concerts, opera and theatre to offer. The Dusseldorf - Cologne - Bonn region is a veritable stronghold of European culture and all forms of classical and contemporary art. Bonn is an academic city with an excellent university (40,000 students) rich in tradition, but also a city which, by virtue of its former function as the capital of Germany, has acquired valuable international experience.

- Secretariat employees and their families will be able to enjoy the school facilities and international societies which have been established in Bonn for the 140 embassies with their 10,000 employees. There are several foreign schools as well as German bilingual schools offering German-English and German-French tuition. In addition, many German schools have special classes for foreigners. No fees are payable at German state schools or universities.

## IV. How to proceed

Germany is prepared to discuss immediately with the interim Secretariat all details including questions relating to the buildings available for use by the Secretariat.

Germany is also prepared to make a similar offer to other UN organisations and international environmental organisations interested in settling in Bonn.

The German Government will be pleased to discuss any aspects of the offer in more detail.

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# DESIGNATION OF A PERMANENT SECRETARIAT AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR ITS FUNCTIONING: PHYSICAL LOCATION

Note by the Secretariat

Attached, as indicated in document A/AC.241/54, is the offer of the Government of Spain to host the Permanent Secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification in Murcia.

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96-20075

CANDIDATURE OF MURCIA TO HOST THE PERMANENT SECRETARIAT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION IN THOSE COUNTRIES EXPERIENCING SERIOUS DROUGHT AND/OR DESERTIFICATION, PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA (PARIS, 17 JUNE 1994)

This Convention is of special importance for Spain. The "Regional Implementation Annex for the Northern Mediterranean" reflects an acknowledgement of the scale of this problem, in this region of Europe of which Spain forms a part, both in relation to its geographical scope, and as regards its intrinsic characteristics.

Efforts to combat desertification in Spain have a long history. The United Nations Conference on Desertification in Nairobi in August-September 1977 already reflected an awareness of the scale of the problem, and initiated the "Plan of Action to Combat Desertification in the Mediterranean Region". This was the first project involving applied research on desertification, encompassing all its constituent processes, and including for the first time the dissemination of information and training for the population groups affected.

Spain has also participated in a large number of international programmes with a direct or indirect connection with desertification. On a European scale, mention could be made of the CORINE programme, featuring soil inventories and assessments in Europe. Spanish scientists are also cooperating in the MEDALUS and EFEDA projects as part of the European Union framework programme for research and development.

Along the same lines, during the course of the negotiations, the Spanish Government, in cooperation with the secretariat of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Convention on Desertification, and with the aim of contributing to the debate, organized two seminars as inputs to the drafting of the Convention - on desertification and soil uses in the Mediterranean basin, and on desertification and migration, held in Almería in June 1993 and February 1994 respectively.

After the Convention was adopted in Paris, Spain organized the First Regional Conference on Desertification in the Northern Mediterranean Region, in June 1995, which laid the foundations for the preparation of an action programme for the region.

For geographical and climatic reasons, Spain is keenly aware of the problem of desertification. In keeping with its international activities, efforts to combat desertification currently enjoy priority among environmental policies. Roughly half of Spain is subject to processes involving the loss of plant cover as well as degradation of soil and water resources. These phenomena have regrettably assumed major dimensions in almost a fifth of the area of the country.

The preparation of the national action programme, in pursuance of the requirements of the Convention, gave a new stimulus and a new direction to efforts to combat desertification in our country. On the one hand, this involved studying, evaluating and analysing the many prevention and control

measures carried out to date, highlighting shortcomings and errors. At the same time, application of the criteria set forth in the Convention also involved the coordination of all operations, the updating of many of them, and a new direction for desertification control efforts, which, in accordance with the Convention, must be comprehensive and coordinated.

Spain is the most seriously affected country in the European Union, and one which, as a result of its long experience in desertification control, has close geographical, economic, historical and cultural links with the American and African continents which can help to facilitate the transfer and exchange of such experience, know-how and technology with the countries of those continents and establish a model of North-South cooperation in this field.

All these elements place Spain in a position to serve as a focal point or point of reference for the formulation and elaboration of national and regional programmes, and in the establishment of machinery for cooperation, as a basis for the application of the Convention and success in working towards its objectives.

MURCIA AS THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARIAT OF THE CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

Set out below are the climatic and pedological characteristics of the Murcia region, which account for its interest in the Convention to Combat Desertification as a result of being affected by this phenomenon, and hence engaged in a search for solutions.

1. METEOROLOGY

The most significant features of the climate in Murcia are as follows:

Meagre mean annual precipitation - 316.3 mm; a large typical deviation, of $\pm$ 116.3 mm; the large number of years (20 per cent) with less than 217 mm of rain recorded, rising to 40 per cent for a rainfall level of 274 mm and 60 per cent for volumes of precipitation of 328 mm. Severe and chronic summer drought, lasting two or three months and sometimes more; high rates of potential evapotranspiration, which in some areas exceeds 1,000 mm per year; the large water deficit in the territory; high aridity indices, the highest in Europe together with neighbouring Almería; rainfall maxima in autumn, corresponding to the specific meteorological system of the western Mediterranean; highly random and often violent rainfall, as a result of repeated meteorological conditions that cause the phenomena known as gota fría (a cold front), which are capable of causing large-scale downpours in short periods of time. The meteorology of the Murcia region offers plentiful examples of short-lived torrential rain with a high capacity for eroding soils suffering from high moisture stress.

2. EROSION

Pedological and geomorphological factors are directly related to the generation of surface runoff. The type of soil, the slope, the rocky surface and the absence of plant cover are conducive to the concentration of large high-energy water flows which discharge water and sediment onto lower areas.

Given the soils in the Murcia region, infiltration is a highly variable process. Infiltration rates range from 0 per cent to 100 per cent of rainfall. Because the behaviour in time and space covers such a wide range, so do the hydrological and erosion processes which are dependent on the rain-infiltration-runoff system.

Repeated lengthy severe droughts interspersed with short but violent downpours create conditions which are highly conducive to erosion, leading to large-scale continuous degradation of soils which enjoy scant protection from plant cover following relentless deforestation.

Soil erosion in Murcia is a fundamental result of the disappearance of plant cover, ploughing to extend the area under cultivation and inappropriate cultivation of arboraceous and herbaceous dry-land crops on land with slopes exceeding 15 per cent in areas that experience very sporadic but intense rainfall. The abandonment of woodland by individuals because of poor economic viability and poor productivity, as a result of which large areas suffer from a lack of interest in sound cultivation, also helps to exacerbate the process of desertification.

Owing to all these factors, around 70 per cent of the area of the Murcia Autonomous Community is currently affected by erosion.

The serious situation described above has led the authorities to put into effect large-scale programmes for flood control, corrective hydrological and forestry operations, reforestation, efforts to sustain existing plant cover, agro-environmental measures, and so on, involving very high budgetary outlays. All in all, the fact that the Murcia Autonomous Community occupies a peripheral region experiencing serious problems of desertification has led to greater awareness of similar problems suffered by other regions - an undoubted advantage or positive factor supporting Murcia's candidature to host the permanent secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification.

FACILITIES AND OFFICES

Office space totalling 1,100 square metres with parking space and all necessary facilities, furnished and equipped, including computer systems to allow a link-up to telecommunication networks.

Appropriate housing will be provided for the Secretary of the Convention.

INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE MURCIA REGION

The Murcia region is linked by motorway with the whole of eastern Spain and Europe, as well as Andalucia and Portugal. San Javier airport is connected by air to London, Madrid, Barcelona, Ibiza, Palma de Mallorca and Vitoria, while the Altet (Alicante) international airport is located 60 kilometres from Murcia by motorway.

Murcia also has a conference centre with a capacity of up to 1,800, equipped with all the most advanced services in terms of audiovisual facilities, office automation, translation, security, catering, etc.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

The features described above and the experience built up in desertification control mean that Murcia possesses a wealth of knowledge and experience in this field.

It has a university containing many faculties, including a Department of Geology and Soil Science and a Water and Environment Institute.

It also possesses the Segura Centre for Soil Science and Applied Biology, which falls under the Higher Council for Scientific Research, as well as the Centre for Agrarian and Agro-Food Research, which reports to the Regional Ministry for the Environment, Agriculture and Water.

Murcia has hosted many scientific meetings on environmental geology and desertification. Furthermore, the region is covered by the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification in the Mediterranean Region developed by the Directorate-General for Nature Conservation and the University of Murcia. The departments of geology and physical geography are engaged in ongoing research on desertification issues.

The Valencia regional government is in the process of establishing a Desertification Institute in the nearby city of Valencia which could also offer support to the Permanent Secretariat which is being invited to Murcia.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The Spanish Government's offer to host the Permanent Secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification includes the following elements, agreed with the Murcia Autonomous Community:

Office space totalling 1,100 square metres, together with 10 parking places and all necessary facilities, furnished and equipped, including computer systems to allow a link-up to telecommunication networks.

The funds needed for the operation of the Permanent Secretariat.

A contribution of US$ 1 million for desertification projects handled by the secretariat, in consultation with the Government of the Autonomous Region, which could be used in part for meetings of experts and technical assistance to the secretariat.

PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES TO BE GRANTED TO THE SECRETARIAT AND ITS STAFF, INCLUDING THE NATURE OF THE HEADQUARTERS AGREEMENT AND OTHER ARRANGEMENTS TO BE MADE IN THE SECRETARIAT AND DIPLOMATIC PRIVILEGES FOR SECRETARIAT OFFICIALS AND THEIR FAMILIES

1. Legal personality

The secretariat shall have legal personality and capacity to enter into contracts, acquire and transfer immovable property and take legal action in the courts.

2. Inviolability

The premises, archives and official correspondence of the secretariat shall be inviolable wherever they may be located. The secretariat may use codes and send and receive correspondence by diplomatic pouch on the same terms as diplomatic missions. Only in cases of grave suspicion may checks be conducted, in the presence of a representative authorized by the Executive Secretary, to determine that the pouches contain only official correspondence.

The property of the secretariat shall be exempt from inspection, requisition, confiscation, expropriation and any coercive measure on the part of the executive, administrative, judicial or legislative authorities. The Spanish authorities shall guarantee protection of the headquarters.

3. Immunity from jurisdiction and attachment

The secretariat shall enjoy immunity from criminal, civil and administrative jurisdiction, unless it expressly renounces such immunity or in cases involving damage caused by a vehicle in the event of an accident. Acceptance of clauses acknowledging jurisdiction in contracts shall presuppose renunciation of immunity, although it shall not involve a renunciation of immunity from attachment, unless expressly stated.

4. Tax exemptions

The secretariat shall be exempted from payment of taxes and charges at the national, regional and municipal levels on the land and premises of the headquarters, with the exception of those imposed on the provision of services by individuals.

The secretariat shall enjoy diplomatic privileges in respect of the import and export of goods for its official use, and the same provisions shall be applied to it as to diplomatic missions. This privilege shall embrace all types of customs duties and related charges, except for the costs of storage, carriage and similar services.

Goods subject to this privilege and deliveries of goods and services for the secretariat shall be exempted from payment of value-added tax, within the limits laid down in applicable international agreements.

5. Miscellaneous

The secretariat shall enjoy freedom and support in respect of currency exchange and transfers and shall enjoy favourable treatment similar to that granted to diplomatic missions in the use of public services.

The Spanish authorities shall facilitate the entry, exit and stay of representatives of parties to the Convention, the management and staff of the secretariat, their spouses and children and, in exceptional cases, other members of their families living with them. These privileges will also be

granted to persons requiring official access to the headquarters on account of their duties, providing that they have duly informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Any visas required shall be issued free of charge. Exemption will be granted from the requirement to register as an alien and obtain residence and work permits where no other paid or professional activity is engaged in.

STATUS OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, HIS DEPUTY AND THE STAFF OF THE SECRETARIAT

The Executive Secretary of the Convention shall enjoy the same privileges, immunities and prerogatives as heads of mission, and his deputy or the person replacing him shall enjoy those of chargé d'affaires ad interim. In all cases exemption from payment of value-added tax shall be granted for deliveries, leases, construction and maintenance work of a value of more than 125,000 pesetas, and the supply of gas, water, electricity, fuel, telephone and radio telephone communication for the residence of the Executive Secretary. The tax exemptions shall be granted exclusively for the residence of the Executive Secretary on the condition that it has been acquired or rented by the secretariat and for official use as his residence.

The Executive Secretary shall designate officials who, by reason of the duties they perform, must enjoy the privileges, immunities and prerogatives granted to diplomatic agents. This may include officials down to the level of P.4 (subject to a maximum to be established by joint agreement and reviewed every two years). In any event the Executive Secretary, his deputy and management staff down to and including the P.4 level shall have the right to duty-free import of objects for their private use.

The purpose of this allowance shall be to guarantee the efficient discharge of the functions of the persons concerned and shall not be granted to those of Spanish nationality or those engaging in paid activities in Spain.

Articles for use and consumption that are imported must correspond to the personal and family requirements of the beneficiaries. Goods subject to the allowance and services shall be exempted from the payment of value-added tax within the limits laid down in applicable international agreements. In any event the exemption from the payment of value-added tax on deliveries destined for the personal use of management staff or to furnish their principal residences shall be limited to a period of 18 months from the date of their accreditation.

The Executive Secretary may import two motor vehicles duty-free, and other management staff down to and including the P level shall be exempted from inspection of their personal luggage unless there are grounds to suppose that it contains objects subject to the payment of duty or to an import ban. However, it may be inspected only in the presence of the person concerned or his authorized representative.

An Executive Secretary who is of Spanish nationality or resides permanently in Spain may enjoy immunity from jurisdiction in respect of official acts performed in pursuance of his duties. Where no such immunity is granted, jurisdiction will be exercised in such a way as not to hamper unduly the work of the secretariat.

The spouse and children of each accredited person who are living with him as his dependants and are not engaged in paid activities in Spain shall enjoy the same privileges and immunities as the person on whom they are dependent. In all cases the spouses of any of the management or administrative officials referred to shall have access to the labour market.

The Permanent Secretary must notify individually the appointment, recruitment and dismissal of each staff member and his status.

IMMUNITIES OF EXPERTS

Experts not covered by the above paragraphs shall, when working, provided that the discharge of their duties so requires and in the case of official travel on behalf of the secretariat, enjoy immunity from arrest or seizure of their personal luggage, except in cases of flagrante delicto, in which case the secretariat shall be informed immediately. They shall also enjoy immunity against any judicial action in respect of acts performed orally or in writing in the exercise of their official duties, and shall not lose it even when they have ceased to perform their duties.

The Executive Secretary may renounce the above-mentioned privileges and immunities on his own behalf or that of the officials of the secretariat or the experts.

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